

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
DIVISION OF HEALTH CARE FINANCING
ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMO SERIES**

NOTICE: 06-04

DATE: March 17, 2006

DISPOSAL DATE: Ongoing

RE: ACCESS Apply for Benefits
and CWW 2.0

To: County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Tribal Chairpersons/Human Services Facilitators
Tribal Economic Support Directors

From: Mark B. Moody
Administrator
Division of Health Care Financing

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to introduce the new process for accepting and processing online applications for FoodShare and Family Medicaid from the ACCESS website. Customers will be able to submit these online applications to local agencies throughout the state starting on June 3, 2006. This memo also introduces the optional process for using new CARES Worker Web (CWW) screens to enter data from mail-in applications. Finally, it provides a summary of the key choices each agency will need to make while integrating these tools into their business model. More detailed information on both tools will be found in Operations Memo 06-15.

Background

In 2003, the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) was awarded a \$1.7 million Food Stamp Program Participation grant to develop and implement Internet-based access tools for the FoodShare and Medicaid Programs. This project is designed to increase participation in FoodShare and Medicaid, improve customer service and satisfaction, ease workload for local agencies and improve payment accuracy.

In August 2004, we launched the "Am I Eligible?" screening tool on www.access.wisconsin.gov (Ops Memos 04-40 and 04-63). In September 2005, we added the "Check My Benefits" tool to this website (05-38).

Prior to designing the ACCESS online application, the ACCESS project team met with supervisors and eligibility workers from about 60 local agencies, through regional supervisor meetings and Milwaukee County supervisors meetings, staff meetings with eligibility workers in Washington and Winnebago counties, and a meeting with the Dane County Call/Change Center. During these meetings, we gathered critical information about how to design the online application so that it would meet workers' needs while achieving the goals of the ACCESS project.

Accepting and Processing ACCESS Applications

Starting on June 3, 2006, low-income residents throughout Wisconsin will have an opportunity to apply for FoodShare and Family Medicaid using an online form available through the ACCESS

website, www.access.wisconsin.gov. Once an applicant has signed the application electronically and submitted it, the application will be sent electronically to the local agency in the county or tribe that the applicant has specified.

Each local agency's ACCESS applications can be viewed, assigned and selected through a set of new CWW screens that make up the *Local Agency Inbox*. Local agencies may also choose to use the Inbox to manage mail-in, walk-in and phone-in Requests For Assistance (RFAs). Doing so may provide local agencies and workers with a more automated, streamlined way of assigning cases and managing workload.

Each local agency will have one Inbox, and all workers may use the inbox screens. This model preserves the most flexibility for local agencies and makes it easy to ensure coverage when someone is absent. Extensive search criteria allow individual workers, supervisors or offices to view only a subset of the items that can be managed through the Inbox.

Once an ACCESS application has reached the Local Agency Inbox, it may be assigned to a worker, or a worker may directly select it for processing. Once a worker begins Application Intake, application data provided by the applicant will appear on the appropriate CWW screen for review by the worker. Aside from this data-population feature, the intake and case confirmation steps for ACCESS applications are identical to those of non-ACCESS applications.

Like Medicaid mail-in applications, ACCESS applications for Family Medicaid will not require an interview. ACCESS applications for FoodShare will require applicants to complete an interview. FoodShare applicants with a hardship exemption will continue to be eligible to complete their interview through a phone call with the worker.

Using New Mail-In Screens

In conjunction with the ACCESS Apply for Benefits project, we have developed a set of new CWW pages that will make it easier for agencies to process data from mail-in Medicaid and FoodShare applications. These new pages allow a Client Registration worker or an Eligibility worker to enter data from a mail-in application directly onto screens that look identical to the mail-in application. The entered data is available to the worker through the same process used for populating Application Intake screens with ACCESS data.

While these new data entry screens are optional, we anticipate that they will significantly improve the process of entering data from mail-in applications to CWW. In particular, it may be desirable for an agency to have clerical workers, instead of eligibility workers, complete mail-in data entry.

Summary of Key Process Decisions for Local Agencies

Each local agency will need to make some key process decisions in order to respond effectively to ACCESS and mail-in applications. These include:

- ✓ Will your agency use the Inbox to view and manage just ACCESS applications, or will it use the Inbox to view and manage all (or some) RFA types? All agencies will need to be ready to use the Inbox for ACCESS applications by June 5, 2006, but each agency may choose when and how to use the Inbox for other RFA types.
- ✓ When using the Inbox to view ACCESS applications and/or other RFAs, will your agency opt to assign RFAs or have certain workers directly select them for processing, or some combination of both?
- ✓ Will your agency use the new CWW mail-in data entry screens to enter data from mail-in applications? If so, who will be responsible for completing this data entry?

- ✓ Who will be responsible for checking the Inbox, assigning RFAs, and processing ACCESS applications?
- ✓ Based on your agency's decisions on the above, your agency will need to determine which staff should complete training offered by DHFS/BEM.

Random Moment Sampling Considerations

After determining how these ACCESS and mail-in applications will be processed, each local agency should also review procedures for participation in the IM/W2 Random Moment Sample and cost reporting. If clerical staff manage the Inbox and/or complete data entry for mail-in applications, changes may be needed to the various RMS reports.

If the clerical worker is part of the IM/W2 functional unit, that person should be included in that unit on the Employee Count Report and all costs (salary, fringe, and other related costs) should be included in the IM/W2 Cost Pool. This is the current procedure and will not change as a result of the ACCESS changes described in this memo.

If the clerical worker also performs functions that support the entire Human Services or Social Services agency that administers the IM and/or W-2 programs, local agencies should consider whether the new work processes cause a disproportionate amount of that worker's time to be spent on IM work.

Please contact Dale Crapp at (608) 266-9365 or crappdj@dhfs.state.wi.us to discuss specific agency situations.

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